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The acquisition of the Dutch quantitative pronoun ER: the role of background language(s)

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Introduction

This study looks at transfer from L1 French and L1 English to the L2 Dutch. We specifically look at the ability to judge and imitate morphosyntactic and semantic structures with the quantitative pronoun ER.

Materials

- Grammaticality Judgement Task
- Sentence Imitation Task
- Dutch Vocabulary Task, Digit Span, Questionnaire

Participants

L1 Participants
- L1 French (N=25), highly advanced, level > B2
- L1 English (N=25), highly advanced, level > B2
- L1 Dutch (N=25)

Average years of exposure:
- L1 French (22:1)
- L1 English (19:7)

Comparison results French-Dutch and English-Dutch

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<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>L1 French</th>
<th>L1 English</th>
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<td>Syntax</td>
<td>v (presence)</td>
<td>positive</td>
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<td>v (absence)</td>
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<td>Semantics</td>
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<td>v (definiteness)</td>
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</table>

In the SI the L1 English speakers behaved as expected, however the L1 French speakers did not; apparently they behaved just like the L1 English speakers.

In the GJT the L1 French seems to have an influence on L2 Dutch, like we expected, BUT a comparison between the L1 French and the L1 English speakers also shows that the L2 French speakers behave exactly the same as the L1 English speakers.

Discussion

- Our predictions were based on Dutch being the L2 for both groups. However, all of the L1 French participants speak English too, and since all participants live in The Netherlands they come into contact with English on a regular basis. This leads to the idea that Dutch is in fact their L3.
- By considering Dutch as an L3 for the L1 French group, we implemented the L2 Status Factor (Bardel and Falk 2007) that claims that the L2 acts as a filter, thereby blocking transfer from the L1 at the syntactic level. Thus, the L2 might have a bigger impact on learning the L3 than the L1. In that case we do not expect to find significant differences between the L1 French and the L1 English groups.

Conclusion

Our goal was to look at the role of L1 French and L1 English on the L2 acquisition of the Dutch quantitative pronoun ER. However, we found that for the L1 English group Dutch is considered the ‘real L2’, and for the L1 French group English should be considered the L2 and Dutch the L3, thereby confirming the L2 Status Factor.

References and Acknowledgements


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